

Opening Statement of the Honorable Mary Bono Mack
Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade Subcommittee Hearing on “Made in
America: Increasing Jobs through Exports and Trade
(Remarks Prepared for Delivery)

In 2007, Apple introduced its first iPhone and Congress finally approved the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement after years of give-and-take. Since then, there have been three new generations of iPhones, two iPads and several new nano iPods – but not a single free trade agreement signed into law. Not one. So while American ingenuity zips along at millions of bits per second, America’s trade policies are stuck in the fax age. It’s time for an upgrade. Our subcommittee has a unique opportunity to roll out a new model for the future and to demonstrate leadership on this critically-important issue. But time is running out.

America’s \$46 billion trade deficit in January grew at the fastest rate in 18 years. While Washington rolls its eyes and wrings its hands, our competitors in Europe are busy signing on the dotted line and moving quickly into promising new markets. We simply can’t sit on the sidelines any longer, allowing ourselves to be benched by partisan politics. Today, we’ll hear what the administration plans to do about the trade imbalance from Francisco J. Sanchez, Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade.

Let me be clear: long-stalled trade promotion agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama should move forward immediately – all of them. Years of lost opportunities have only resulted in thousands of lost jobs all across the country. Let’s make “Made in America” matter again by actually increasing jobs through expanded exports and trade.

If you doubt that we can do it, then just consider the iPhone again. Today, Apple is the second most valuable company in the world, and yet – at one point – it was 90 days from bankruptcy court. Apple didn’t turn around its fortunes by being timid and parochial. Instead the company was bold and innovative. Apple sold shares to rival Microsoft and agreed to make Internet Explorer its default browser.

That’s the kind of decisive, forward-looking thinking we need today when it comes to our trade policies. President Obama has vowed to double exports in five years, but that’s simply not going to happen if we continue to allow free trade agreements to be held hostage by organized labor and to languish in limbo. It’s disingenuous for the administration to say: “Let’s work together to create new jobs, but not if it means passing all three trade agreements together.”

That’s the kind of thinking that leads to a \$46 billion U.S. trade deficit in January. And that’s the kind of thinking that threatens the future prosperity of our nation. To date, the administration has not offered any detailed plans for opening up trade with Colombia and Panama. We’ve gotten plenty of promises, but no plans. It’s time to quit playing politics with our trade policies. Tens of thousands of new jobs hang in the balance, as well as tens of billions of dollars in new exports.

Today, American businesses are genuinely concerned – and, I believe, rightfully so – that if the proposed the U.S.-Korea agreement is finally approved this year by itself, then separate trade deals with Colombia and Panama will be quietly forgotten, as a concession to organized labor. If that’s not the case, Secretary Sanchez, then this is the administration’s golden opportunity to set the record straight. Please tell us how the White House plans to deal with all three free-trade agreements. Today, you have a chance to make some news, and to give American businesses and workers a reason to cheer. I have my fingers crossed, Mr. Secretary, but – at the

very least – let’s make sure our signals aren’t crossed. Exactly what is the administration’s plan? And what’s the timetable for accomplishing it?

Recently, Secretary of State Clinton said, “Our goal is to have all three pending agreements – Korea, Panama and Colombia – with their outstanding issues addressed and approved by Congress this year.” And, yet, with the next breath, an administration official warns that trying to pass all three free trade agreements together “is putting all three agreements at risk.” Perhaps, I lost the fax, Mr. Secretary, but how do you reconcile those positions?

It’s my sincere hope that we can put politics aside, work out our legitimate differences and approve all three trade agreements this year. We simply can’t sit on the sidelines any longer while other nations gain footholds in promising, new global markets. Too much is at stake for us to fail.